

UPDATE ON AB 722

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES STUDIED UNDER AB 722

Student support services are being studied this year by the California Department of Education. Assembly Bill 722, sponsored by Assemblymember Ellen M. Corbett, was signed by Governor Gray Davis on September 5, 2001, and requires the State Department of Education to conduct a study of pupil support services, defined to include school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers, in the schools. The study will cover the following areas as outlined in the bill:

- 1) To determine effective ratios of pupil-to-school counselors, pupil-to-school psychologists, and pupil-to-school social workers necessary at a school to maintain adequate pupil support services.
- 2) To examine the varying and unique needs for pupil support services in the individual school districts of the state.
- 3) To determine the causes of difficulties in attracting and retaining credentialed pupil support personnel to work in the schools.
- 4) To examine the design and implementation of effective pupil support services and programs.
- 5) To examine the assessment of quality and pupil outcomes of the pupil support services provided in schools.
- 6) To examine the correlation between a lower pupil-to-pupil support personnel ratio and a pupil's well-being, ability to learn, and academic achievement.
- 7) To examine the use of credentialed pupil support personnel and the use of contracted pupil support personnel.

The AB 722 Report will be available for public dissemination in April 2003. The report will include the findings of the study and recommendations to the legislature.

The study is being conducted through the Counseling and Student Support Office of the California Department of Education. Consultants Dr. Jackie M. Allen and Paul Meyers are working on the project with the special assistance of Dr. Milton Wilson, retired annuitant.

In order to assist in the study, the AB 722 Study Work Group was formed. The Work Group provides direction, resources, referrals, and feedback for the study. The Work Group consists of practitioners, representatives from professional associations, instructors of the respective pupil personnel services training programs, and parent and student organizations. Organizations represented on the AB 722 Work Group include the Association of California School Administrators, California Association of School Counselors, Inc., California Association of School Psychologists, California Association of Student Councils, California Association of Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance, California Association of Pupil Personnel Administrators, California Federation of Teachers, California School

Boards Association, California School Counselor Association, California School Nurses Organization, California State Parent Teacher Association, California Teachers Association, and National Association of Social Workers-California Chapter.

The AB 722 Study Work Group has held three meetings in March, August, and November of 2002. Work Group members provided valuable feedback to guide the ongoing study. A pupil support services survey was sent in May 2002 to a representative sample of the school districts in the state. Surveys, representing the student support services available to 2.6 million of the students in the state, provided current information on student support service ratios; district methods of evaluating student support services; the needs and effectiveness of student support services; hiring and retention of student support personnel; the use of contract services; and correlations between students' well being, ability to learn, and academic achievement and student support services ratios. An online survey of parents, students, teachers, and school board members is being conducted to confirm survey data. The third phase of the study is a series of focus groups held throughout the state to provide additional input from students, parents, teachers, administrators, and student support services specialists.

In addition, a literature search, current district and organizational studies or surveys, national professional association data, state model programs, existing statewide studies, such as the Healthy Kids Survey, and the 1999 Survey of Pupil Personnel Services conducted by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education, will be used for the final report. The final meeting of the AB 722 Work Group will take place in February 2003; at that time, the Work Group will review the draft of the report and provide its final feedback.